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COLCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Budget Workshop #2

Thursday, February 27, 2025
6:00PM
William J. Johnston Middle School BlackBox Theatre

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT : Chair Donna Antonacci, Vice-Chair Christopher Rivers, Secretary Margo Gignac, Alexander Oliphant, Michelle Millington, Rosemary Gignac and Stefanie Tracey-Calash.

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT : Superintendent Daniel P. Sullivan, III, Assistant Superintendent Jessica L. Kuckel, Director of Pupil Services Eve Hurley, Bacon Academy (BA) Principal Amy Begué, BA Assistant Principal Melissa Cyr, BA Assistant Principal Michael Mal, William J Johnston Middle School (WJJMS) Principal Christopher Bennett, WJJMS Assistant Principal Stacey Ewings, Colchester Elementary School (CES) Principal Judy O'Meara.

OTHERS PRESENT : Director of Finance and Operations Rachel Linkkila, Instructional Technology Coordinator Barbara Johnson, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent Alyssa Fratoni, Director of Educational Operations Andrew Barillari, Athletic Director Kevin Burke, HFLenz Representative Scott Kraynak

1. **MEETING OPENING**
   - 1.1. Call to Order
     Chair Antonacci called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM
   - 1.2 Roll Call
     Vice-Chair Rivers present via Zoom. All other Members present.
   - 1.3 Pledge of Allegiance

2. ***PRIORITY DISCUSSION**
   - 2.1. *Discussion and Possible Action on BA HVAC Design Work from HFLenz

Kraynak provided the report on HVAC Design Work recommendations. He stated that AC will be added to the gym, and the AC in the auditorium will be fixed, but some areas will remain without AC. The heating system will stay the same but will use a heat pump. The single-unit system for the cafeteria will not be included, as the cafeteria is considered an alternate option. The final decision will depend on the budget. The Board discussed the HVAC needs for the cafeteria and budget considerations. The estimated cost to add HVAC to the back-of-house cafeteria is around $200K, including demolition, ceiling removal, and steel work. A question was raised about whether the area

where students eat currently has AC. Given the significant cost, the focus remains on prioritization and ensuring the best use of funds.

Motion by: C.Rivers
Motion to authorize the administration to move forward and to prepare a RFP to send out to bid.
Second: M. Gignac
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

2.2. Board Q&A on Following Budgets: BA, WJJMS, Athletics, Facilities, Technology

BA Principal Begué presented BA projections, budget priorities, student progress, community involvement and pride, and the graduate profile. WJ Principal Bennett presented WJ Puma Pride, highlights, projections, connected community of learners, math and reading data and new classes.

Vice-Chair Rivers arrived in person at 6:33PM

Athletic Director Burke presented statistics on athletics at BA, noting that for the 23-24 school year, they had 483 student athletes, with 173 multi-sport athletes. This year, the trends are pointing to increase total athletes to 502, but final numbers will not be counted until after Spring Sport Sign-Ups are closed. He stated that there are numerous sports that are ECC Division Champions. He also stated that there are numerous BA Graduates that are competing in college athletics. Burke spoke about the Co-Op model needed for some sports to continue, which includes partnering with surrounding towns to create a team.

Director Barillari presented on Facilities, giving an overview of the schools, duties of the custodial staff, shared services with the town, and planned versus unexpected projects.

Questions from the Board Members:

- M.Millington
  - Where do we come in on the scale of Pay to Play for sports?
    - Burke stated we are one of the highest
  - Page 36, line 186 in regards to Pay to Play
    - Linkkila stated that last year, it was estimated to bring in a bigger amount than we received, so the number was scaled back this year. It is also divided under multiple line items in the budget.
  - Is there a process to help families pay for sports if they cannot afford it?
    - Yes, there is an online form that goes to BA Office Professional then to Principal Begué to determine free/reduced considerations.
  - What is the family cap for Pay to Play?
    - $540
  - Is there a reason why sports are in jeopardy?
    - Burke stated we just can't fill the team.
  - What are examples of the work that the Facilities Manager could do rather than giving the work to a vendor, and how much would the salary be?
    - Simple repairs, such as installing a pump, etc.

        - Depends on the background of the worker. If they are licensed in a certain trade, they could do the work, not hiring for a vendor. They would require a salary increase if licensed.
    - Are there vendors that we are under contract with?
        - McKenney Mechanical
- Chair Antonacci
    - Can the cost of savings be estimated from hiring a Facilities Manager?
        - Vice-Chair Rivers suggested looking at the last 12 months of work orders for labor costs and what having a Facilities Manager would save.
- M.Gignac
    - Would it be beneficial to work with the Town and/or Sports Leagues for the playground and grounds repairs that are needed at JJIS?
        - There is a possibility to collaborate with the town to take care of many of the repairs to the equipment.
- A.Oliphant
    - What would the Facilities Manager vehicle be used for?
        - Traveling school to school, holding tools, bringing equipment school to school, going to a hardware store to pick up materials/parts, etc.
- Vice-Chair Rivers
    - Page 28, why negative amounts?
        - WJ is asking for what they need and being very precise on their numbers.
    - Looking at WJ's certified staff, it seems most are on the top step (step 12)
        - Veteran teachers. When teachers come to WJ, they stay. Increased retention because of the use of Teams and Mentors
    - How does the Co-Op model work in Athletics for cost?
        - Add up the cost for buses, coaches and supplies and divide by the number of athletes.
    - Page 59, Pay to Play Revenue, where does it go?
        - Offset Officials and Transportation
    - Page 34, line 89-93, BA Summer nursing hours. What is it for?
        - Processing physicals for athletics, something only a nurse can do.
    - Page 36, Magnet School tuition is down
        - More students are choosing to stay at BA, working closely with WJ for 8th grade students to have the opportunity to tour BA.
    - Page 37, line 250, propane, what is it for?
        - Classes at BA that use propane
    - Page 37, line 244, huge decrease, why?
        - Linkkila looked at the rate trends every day for oil, when the rate reached a low enough point to save a large amount, the rate was locked in.
    - Tuition for Out of District students to come to BA?
        - The Board discussed $14,500 but no vote was done.
- S.Tracey-Calash
    - How would we obtain a vehicle for the Facilities Manager?
        - Build a package for what the vehicle would need

- Chair Antonacci
    - Page 15, line 194, diesel price, is it the same as at the oil?
        - Yes, trended the rats daily and locked in when low enough to see large savings.

2.3. Statement from Board Chair on FOI/Public Comment

The Board aims to keep meetings efficient and respectful of everyone's time. While open to the public, these meetings are not public forums. Public comment is encouraged but not required by law, and the Board follows policy 1120, which outlines restrictions, including requiring speakers to state their name and address. This ensures discussions remain relevant to Colchester citizens and agenda items. Those with concerns not on the agenda are encouraged to email boe@colchesterct.org

2.4. Citizen Q&A on Following Budgets: BA, WJJMS, Athletics, Facilities, Technology

- Tiffany Moroch, Maclyn Drive
    - Comments about capital maintenance
- Jason LaChapelle, Highwood Circle, via Zoom
    - Comments on free speech
- Karen Belding, Deer Run Drive
    - Commented on the amazing programs offered at the Middle and High School and stated she is not surprised that we are that high in the rankings of top public schools in the state.
- Vince Rose, Shadbush Drive, via Zoom
    - The budget's level of detail is excellent, providing the transparency requested. There is a strong passion for teaching, though it's easy for that dedication to be taken for granted. Capital repairs should not be delayed, as postponing them only increases costs. There is frustration over the leaking roof at BA, with concerns about the ongoing issue and the need for urgent repairs.

2.5. Board Q&A on Following Budgets: BA, WJJMS, Athletics, Facilities, Technology

- S.Tracey-Calash
    - Page 45, line 41, BA theatre project
        - Johnson explained that she applied for a grant worth $150,000 and received $20,000 to put towards the project. She has applied for the grant again
    - Page 46, lines 82-83
        - Instructional software that can work with ELA and Math in grades 3-12. Provide personalized instruction in one place.
    - Page 47, line 131
        - Google is charging for security services to keep our EDU account safe.
    - Is there a benefit and cost savings to choosing just one brand of hardware?
        - There are discounts for group pricing and cooperative buying. We need to buy equipment that can be flexible and powerful enough to handle the next thing.
- M.Millington
    - How long has it been since the BA theatre has been updated?
        - Small updates to the AV system just before 2020, but most other updates seem to have been done in the mid-2000's
    - Addressing the internet issues at BA?

- It was not an infrastructure problem, it was how the online traffic was being routed out of the building.

3. **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by: S.Tracey-Calash
Motion to adjourn.
Second: M.Gignac
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

Chair Antonacci adjourned the meeting at 8:39 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Afratoni

Alyssa Fratoni
Executive Assistant to the Superintendent